

Amendments to the Claims:

A listing of the entire set of pending claims (including amendments to the claims, if any) is submitted herewith per 37 CFR 1.121. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of irradiating a surface (L1, L2) comprising a photosensitive layer (L2) on a substrate (L1), wherein the surface (L1, L2) is immersed in an immersion fluid (L3), the method comprising:

applying a removable protective transparent layer (L4) to the surface (L1, L2), wherein the removable protective transparent layer (L4) serves to space apart the surface (L1, L2) from the immersion fluid (L3),

projecting electromagnetic radiation at a particular wavelength onto the photosensitive layer (L2) of the surface (L1, L2) through the immersion fluid (L3) and through the removable protective transparent layer (L4), and

~~subsequently removing the removable protective transparent layer (L4)~~
comprising:

immersing the removable protective transparent layer (L4) in an immersion fluid without dissolving it,

altering the solubility of the removable protective transparent layer (L4) after the immersion in the immersion fluid by a flood exposure at a different wavelength to the particular wavelength of the projected electromagnetic radiation to ensure that the protective transparent layer (L4) is fully dissolvable, and

dissolving the removable protective transparent layer (L4),
wherein the thickness of the removable protective transparent layer (L4) is greater than or equal to 200 nm.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the projecting comprises projecting a pattern onto the photosensitive layer (L2).

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the photosensitive layer (L2) is a resist layer (L2) and the projecting comprises projecting a pattern to pattern the resist layer (L2) to form a patterned resist layer (L2).

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, further comprising a step of using the patterned resist layer (L2) as a mask in a further lithographic step.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the thickness of the removable protective transparent layer (L4) is such that imperfections in the immersion fluid are out of focus as projected on the surface.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the step of the removal of the removable protective transparent layer (L4) precedes or is combined with a step of developing the photosensitive layer (L3).

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, the removable protective transparent layer (L4) being removed by dissolving with a dissolving fluid.

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the dissolving fluid is used for developing the photosensitive layer (L3).

9. – 11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the removable protective transparent layer (L4, L5) comprises an upper (L5) and a lower layer (L4), the upper layer (L5) having an alterable solubility.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, the lower layer (L4) having a filter function to protect the resist layer (L2) from the altering step.

14. – 19. Cancelled

20. (Currently Amended) A method of irradiating a surface (L1, L2) comprising a photosensitive layer (L2) on a substrate (L1), wherein the surface (L1, L2) is immersed in an immersion fluid (L3), the method comprising:

applying a removable protective transparent layer (L4) to the surface (L1, L2), wherein the removable protective transparent layer (L4) serves to space apart the surface (L1, L2) from the immersion fluid (L3),

projecting electromagnetic radiation onto the photosensitive layer (L2) of the surface (L1, L2) through the immersion fluid (L3) and through the removable protective transparent layer (L4), and

~~subsequently removing the removable protective transparent layer (L4)~~
comprising:

immersing the removable protective transparent layer (L4) in an immersion fluid without dissolving it,

altering the solubility of the removable protective transparent layer (L4) after the immersion in the immersion fluid by a post exposure bake process, and

dissolving the removable protective transparent layer (L4).

wherein the thickness of the removable protective transparent layer (L4) is greater than or equal to 200 nm.

21. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the thickness of the removable transparent layer is greater than or equal to 500 nm.

22. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the thickness of the removable transparent layer is greater than or equal to 1 micron.

23. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the thickness of the removable transparent layer is greater than or equal to 5 micron.

24. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the thickness of the removable transparent layer is greater than or equal to 500 nm.

25. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the wherein the thickness of the removable transparent layer is greater than or equal to 1 micron.

26. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the wherein the thickness of the removable transparent layer is greater than or equal to 5 micron.